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# RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES OF THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

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## *Organization*

THE board of education is composed of members appointed by the mayor for a term of years. They are controlled by the charter of the city of New York and they work under their own by-laws. They engage academic and technical experts who build, manage and direct the schools. The head of the academic department is Wm. H. Maxwell, city superintendent of schools. Under his direction are the associate city superintendents and district superintendents, the principals and teachers of schools and the directors of special branches. One of the district superintendents is assigned to the management of evening recreation centers and vacation playgrounds. The director of physical training has charge of the instruction in physical training, play and athletics in all schools, the management of after-school athletics and jurisdiction over all matters relating to the health of teachers and pupils.

## *Physical Training and Athletics*

Because the department of education controls a large fraction of child life it must take cognizance of the need of recreation. Seven hundred thousand children are in its care for eight thousand hours during the years between six and fourteen. The function of recreation is three-fold. First, it is essential to maintenance of the child's immediate health, to his sound organic development and to his future health and happiness. Second, education by recreation is the normal biological mode of instruction. By it the child gains motor facility and manual power and learns in mimic form of adult life. Third, its importance is social. By recreation, children learn to adjust themselves to other children, and develop their own individualities. Without this, they would approach adult life without a normal basis for social relations. Play is a

natural laboratory of social training. The community that fails to provide for its children the salutary benefits of play may be assured that it will bear the burden of a largely increased juvenile delinquency and future criminality, that it will develop an anemic, unstable and vicious generation.

### *Method and Time*

During the school day, one-third of the time of the first year is given to physical training and recreation. This proportion diminishes to one-sixteenth in the eighth year. This is somewhat insufficient. During this time the children learn forms of play natural to their successive stages under natural conditions, which under present conditions they could not otherwise do. The forms of play thus learned go over into life and are practised outside of school. The following schedule shows the minimum time which should be given to motor recreation:

<i>Age</i>	<i>Per cent of Waking Hours</i>	<i>Type</i>
1- 3	80%	Baby play
3- 6	75%	Run about play
6- 8	60%	Quiet, chase, singing and sense training games
8-10	50%	Individual games, grace and skill, walking
10-12	40%	Same, throwing and running emphasized, team games
12-16	20%	Team games. Beginning athletics of mild type
16-18	15%	Athletics and athletic games
Adult	5%	Athletic games of diminishing vigor
Old Age	15%	Games of motor skill and walking

For children below fourteen, New York city must needs provide for 365,000,000 hours of play in places that are fit and safe. To some extent they must also provide equipment and supervision. At present, through the park department, playgrounds, the department of education with its athletic centers and vacation playgrounds, and private recreation organizations, approximately 24,000,000 hours are provided. The remainder is left to chance,

influenced by the rapidly decreasing number of vacant lots and the rapidly increasing hazards of the street.

### *Athletic Centers*

The most definite thing that has been done in several years to meet this recreation need is the development of the athletic center. Some years ago the playground was vacant after three o'clock, and the street outside the playground was covered with children playing. An experiment was made; twenty centers were opened, and experienced teachers who taught in the schools were put in charge. The experiment succeeded. The board of estimate granted funds, and now there are one hundred sixty-three centers open with an attendance of about one hundred fifty thousand per week, or a total of about six million hours a year. There is no cost for rent and exceedingly little cost for upkeep. Children are taken from the physically dangerous and morally unsafe street. Boys are getting athletic training instead of criminal training. Athletic centers probably save one child every three weeks from death and one child every week from serious injury.

### *Types of Athletics*

There are two forms, intensive and extensive. Under natural conditions, the former reaches but few boys, and these few need athletics least. A single exceptional athlete already physically strong may receive the attention and training that should be given to a thousand boys. On the other hand, extensive athletics seek to put all boys in the hygienic athletic training which is the real motive for school-boy athletics. Of extensive athletics there are two forms; the first is a group competition in which whole classes of boys combine their efforts to make a class average record, which is the basis of competition in comparison with other class records. The second is competition against standards. A series of standards is set up in chinning, jumping and running. A boy who makes a satisfactory record is awarded an inexpensive bronze silver badge, which he proudly wears. To get this honor, a boy must also have good scholarship and good military posture. Folk dances adopted from the European dances and modified group athletic competition characterize the work for girls, who are carefully shielded from

individual competition and from personal display before mixed groups of spectators.

*Ideals*

It is the purpose of the combined departments of physical training, educational hygiene and athletics to care for the health of the city's school children, to develop a vigorous organic equipment, to inculcate a high degree of motor competence, and to use childhood for social training for adult life. This set of ideals has led through investigation and experiment to the formulation of the administrative program, the recreation phase of which has been briefly sketched.

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